

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DACCA 02146 221042Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 OMB-01
TRSE-00 ACDA-07 SCS-03 SCA-01 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05
AID-05 /088 W
-----221055Z 063498 /17

O P 220948Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4353
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
CINCPAC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2146

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BG
SUBJ: ZIA TO PRESIDENCY: BACKGROUND AND PROSPECTS

REF: DACCA 2109

1. WHY ACTION NOW? WE ARE NOT YET CERTAIN WHY ZIA
ACTED TO ASSUME THE PRESIDENCY NOW. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT
SAYEM'S HEALTH HAS DETERIORATED TO THE POINT THAT HE CAN
NO LONGER FUNCTION IN HIS OFFICE (PARA 5 BELOW). IT
IS KNOWN THAT ZIA (AND WE BELIEVE OTHERS IN THE MILITARY)
WERE UNHAPPY WITH SAYEM'S PLODDING PERFORMANCE IN HIS
TITULAR AND PORTFOLIO DUTIES (PARA 3), BUT WHETHER
THERE WAS AN IMMEDIATE SPECIFIC DIFFICULTY IS NOT NOW
KNOWN. MORE LIKELY, BUT STILL FAR FROM CONFIRMED, IS THAT
A SERIES OF EVENTS BEGINNING AT LEAST AS EARLY AS SAYEM'S
OPPOSITION TO LAST NOVEMBER'S POSTPONMENT OF THE
GENERAL ELECTIONS HAVE ACCUMULATED MILITARY IMPATIENCE
WITH SAYEM AND SOME OR ALL OF HIS CIVILIAN ADVISORS AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DACCA 02146 221042Z

AN ISSUE, PERHAPS MINOR IN ITSELF, PRECIPITATED WHAT
APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A SUDDEN DECISION. ONE QUESTION
HANGING FIRE WAS BANGLADESHI REPRESENTATION AT THE
COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE IN JUNE. WE ASSUME, THAT THE
DECISION, WHILE POSSIBLE ZIA'S ALONE, WAS TAKEN IN FULL
COORDINATION WITH THE KEY MEMBERS OF THE ARMY. WHETHER
ADMIRAL KHAN AND AIR VICE MARSHAL MAHMOOD WERE INCLUDED IS

NOT CLEAR.

2. ANOMALY REMOVED: THE ELEVATION OF ZIA ELIMINATES AN ANOMALY WHICH WAS CREATED LAST NOVEMBER WHEN HE DISPLACED SAYEM AS CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, BUT PERMITTED SAYEM TO REMAIN AS FORMAL HEAD OF STATE. SAYEM THEN RETAINED THE CEREMONIAL DUTIES, BUT HE ALSO CONTINUED TO ACT AS CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF ADVISORS (I.E. CABINET) AND BY VIRTUE OF THAT POSITION WAS NECESSARILY INVOLVED TO SOME EXTENT IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE COUNTRY. HE ALSO THEN RETAINED HIS PORTFOLIOS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENSE, LAW AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS, AND ESTABLISHMENT (I.E., CONTROL OVER THE VICIL SERVICE AS AN INSTITUTION).

3. SAYEM'S POSITION? WE HAVE KNOWN FOR SOME TIME THAT ZIA WAS UNHAPPY WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY (SEE DACCA 1461) AND SAYEM WAS REPLACED IN THIS PORTFOLIO LAST MONTH BY SHAMSUL HUG. ZIA NOW HOLDS THE OTHER PORTFOLIOS AND MUST RETAIN THEM (LIKELY IN THE CASE OF DEFENSE AND ESTABLISHMENT) OR FIND NEW APPOINTEES FOR THEM (PROBABLY LAW AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS). HE MUST ALSO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO RETAIN HIS OWN PORTFOLIOS OF FINANCE AND HOME AFFAIRS. IT WOULD SEEM PROBABLE THAT HE WILL DROP THESE; EVEN AN ENERGETIC GENERAL CAN KEEP ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF BALLS IN THE AIR AT THE SAME TIME. WE ASSUME HE WILL HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH RESHAPING THE COUNCIL IF HE CHOOSES, AS IT PRESUMABLY STNADS DISSOLVED IN A LEGAL SENSE WITH THE RESIGNATION OF ITS CHAIRMAN.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DACCA 02146 221042Z

4. ZIA AND THE ARMY: ANOTHER POST WHICH ZIA MUST DECIDE TO RETAIN OR DROP IS THAT OF CHIEF OF THE ARMY STAFF. THERE WERE RUMORS DURING THE EVENING OF APRIL 21 THAT MAJOR GENERAL ERSHAD WOULD BECOME CHIEF OF STAFF AND WOULD ALSO BE APPOINTED A DEPUTY CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTARTOR, PLACING HIM ON A PART WITH ADMIRAL KHAN, THE NAVY CHIEF, AND AIR VICE MARSHAL MAHMOOD, THE AIR FORCE CHIEF. PRIOR TO HIS NOVEMBER ELEVATION ZIA HIMSELF WAS A DCMLA. WHILE THE PROMOTION OF ERSHAD IS ON ITSELF LOGICAL, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT ZIA'S POWER BASE IS IN THE ARMY AND HE COULD WISH TO RETAIN HIS PLACE IN THE DIRECT CHAIR OF COMMAND. WHERE ERSHAD (OR SOMEONE ELSE) PROMOTED IT WOULD SET OFF A SERIES OF CHANGES WHICH ZIA COULD BE EXPECTED TO USE TO MAINTAIN OR STRENGTHEN THE LOYALTY OF THE ARMY TO HIM. (ZIA IS, OF COURSE, "COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF" BY VIRTUE OF BEING PRESIDENT.)

5. SAYEM'S "ILL HEALTH": MAHMOOD TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT SAYEM HAD BEEN ILL, BUT THIS WAS SAID WITHOUT

MUCH CONVICTION. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY NOTED SAYEM "HAD BEEN ILL FOR TWO DAYS". SO FAR AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO OBSERVE THE RATHER REMOTE FORMER PRESIDENT HE LOOKS NO BETTER OR WORSE THAN HE HAS FOR SOME TIME. HE IS QUITE ELDERLY 61 AND SUFFERS FROM HYPERTENSION. REGARDLESS OF THE ACTUAL STATE OF HIS HEALTH, WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO SEE SAYEM LEAVE BANGLADESH FOR "TREATMENT" ABROAD.

6. POLICIES: EXCEPT FOR THE EXPECTED REARRANGEMENT OF PORTFOLIOS AT THE ADVISOR LEVEL WE FORESEE LITTLE CHANGE EITHER IN THE METHOD OF GOVERNANCE OF THE COUNTRY OR IN THE POLICIES WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION WILL PURSUE. ZIA, NO DOUBT, HOPES THAT BY HIS ENERGY AND DIRECT LEADERSHIP AT THE TOP HE WILL BE ABLE TO INSTILL A HIGHER LEVEL OF ENTHUSIASM AND GREATER EFFICIENCY IN THE GOVERNMENT. HE HAS ALREADY IN HIS SERIES OF TALKS TO NEWLY ELECTED
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 DACCA 02146 221042Z

UNION COUNCIL CHAIRMAN TRIED TO INVIGORATE THAT LEVEL OF THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY.

7. NEW PRONOUNCEMENTS: ZIA IS TO SPEAK TO THE NATION ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 22. WE ASSUME THAT THE BASIC CONTENT OF THIS ADDRESS WILL BE THE PROGRAMS HE HAS RECENTLY OUTLINED TO THE UNION COUNCIL CHAIRMEN (SEE DACCA 1963), BUT MORE THAN THIS WILL BE EXPECTED BY MANY. LOOKED FOR BY SOME IS A SCHEDULE FOR ELECTIONS TO A NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE BODY. THE PLODDING PROGRESS OF LOCAL ELECTIONS IS CONTINUING BUT TO MANY THIS IS NOT ENOUGH.

8. REACTION: WE HAVE NOTED IN SPETELS THAT OBSERVABLE PUBLIC REACTION TO THE CHANGE HAS BEEN ALMOST TOTALLY ABSENT. DACCA IS GOING ABOUT ITS USUAL FRIDAY BUSINESS. A LARGE GATHERING OF OFFICIALS AND PRIVATE CITIZENS AT THE BRITISH QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY RECEPTION LAST EVENING GREETING THE NEWS (WHICH CAME JUST BEFORE THE GUESTS ARRIVED AND MANY HEARD IT FOR THE FIRST TIME THERE) WITH ALMOST NO CONCERN. THERE ARE NO SIGNS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION EXPECTS ANY ADVERSE REACTION. POLICE ARE IN THEIR USUAL NUMBERS IN THE CITY AND NO UNUSUAL MILITARY ACTIVITY HAS BEEN OBSERVED.

9. WE WILL BE COMMENTING FURTHER AFTER THE CONTENT OF ZIA'S ADDRESS IS KNOWN.
MASTERS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DACCA02146
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770140-0370
Format: TEL
From: DACCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770430/aaaaazpb.tel
Line Count: 165
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a7801fa1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 DACCA 2109
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2728803
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ZIA TO PRESIDENCY: BACKGROUND AND PROSPECTS
TAGS: PINT, BG, (RAHMAN, ZIAUR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a7801fa1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009